



# City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

## Fact Sheet

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### **Recommendation to benefit Thornton Creek, add open space at Northgate**

#### **What is the proposed Northgate drainage solution?**

The City of Seattle's goal for a drainage project in the Northgate Urban Center is to improve the health of Thornton Creek and enhance the neighborhood's natural environment by integrating stormwater treatment with open space in the south lot of Northgate Mall. The project creates an open channel with water flowing through it year round, native plant landscaping, and pedestrian pathways. This unique storm drainage approach helps clean polluted urban runoff from roads, buildings and parking lots in the headwaters of the South Branch of Thornton Creek.

#### **Why a project at this location?**

For several years, the community, developers and the City have debated the best approach at the Northgate South Lot to enhance Thornton Creek and further the goals of the Northgate Comprehensive Plan. The Northgate South Lot is located at the base of a 670-acre drainage area and provides the last opportunity to provide water quality improvement of polluted stormwater before discharging to Thornton Creek just across 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Also, this site is located in the heart of the Northgate Urban Center, adjacent to the proposed 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Street improvements and the new community center and branch library that are also building new stormwater improvements.

#### **What is the history of this project?**

In December 2003, the City Council approved a 12-month option to purchase 2.7 acres of the Northgate Mall south lot for \$375,000 from Simon Properties, well below market value. The Council also directed SPU to evaluate drainage alternatives for the south lot and deliver a recommendation.

#### **Who has been involved in the process?**

The resolution requested that SPU coordinate site planning with Lorig Associates, a Seattle-based developer and property manager, which plans to develop housing and retail on the adjacent 5.9 acres. SPU and Lorig have agreed to a reconfiguration of the two lots which is necessary to build the recommended drainage project and that also works well for the Lorig development.

The resolution also established a broad-based Northgate Stakeholder Group, with 22 representatives from a wide range of community and business interests to advise the City on projects affecting the revitalization of Northgate. The Stakeholder Groups held five meetings, a Northgate Community Forum, and several informal sessions and field trips to gather information, discuss the options, and advise the City on the alternatives. On June 3, the stakeholders voted unanimously to recommend this solution, which is also the Mayor's recommendation to City Council.

#### **How was this project evaluated?**

Seattle Public Utilities convened a technical team that performed a peer review of the technical information. The team included landscape architect, Peggy Gaynor, who developed the concept for the recommended solution, and other City consultants, planners, engineers, and economists. The technical team evaluated project costs, water quality benefits, and potential flooding risks and came to consensus on the results. The Northgate Stakeholder Group and City considered these results in reaching this recommendation.

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**What criteria did you use in selecting an option for recommendation?**

1. Water quality improvements
2. Infiltration and detention benefits
3. Open space amenities
4. Engineering feasibility
5. Compliance with drainage fund requirements
6. Relative risks
7. Life-cycle costs

**What other drainage options were considered?**

**Daylight** — excavate and remove the existing conveyance pipe under the South lot and route dry-weather flows and all the storm flows from the contributing 670 acres through the constructed channel.

**Natural Systems** — convey drainage from approximately 100-acres of the adjacent neighborhood to a series of constructed bioswales for water quality treatment before discharging to the conveyance pipe under the lot.

**Why was the hybrid option recommended?**

1. The hybrid offers the most cost-effective water quality approach and removes the most pollutants of the three options studied.
2. Improving water quality here at the headwaters will benefit the entire downstream Thornton Creek
3. The hybrid provides some stormwater infiltration and detention which reduces downstream habitat damage caused by frequent small storms
4. It creates a channel with year-round running water.
5. The Northgate Stakeholders Group unanimously recommended this alternative.

**How does this drainage solution benefit the Northgate Community?**

Resolving the longstanding debate over a stormwater solution to benefit Thornton Creek on the Northgate south lot allows new transit-oriented housing and commercial development to succeed, bringing new jobs, tax revenues, and stimulating new economic investment in the community. This project will create new public open space and pathways to help link pedestrians to neighborhoods and the New Northgate Library, Park, Community Center and 5th Avenue NE Streetscape improvements.

**How much is this project going to cost?**

The total cost for this project is estimated to be \$6.85 million, plus \$375,000 to purchase 2.7 acres from Simon Properties.

**What is the timeline for the project?**

3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2004 - property acquisition  
2005-2006 - planning and design  
2007-2008 - construction

SPU is coordinating site planning with the adjacent Lorig project to enhance pedestrian access and open space opportunities, so timing of the design and construction of SPU's project depends somewhat on the Lorig timeline. In addition, coordinated construction may result in some efficiency that could shorten the timeline and reduce the cost.

**What happens next?**

The Mayor will forward legislation to the City Council on June 15 and recommend adoption of the hybrid option.